critical digest

139 East 47 St. NY 17 NY
EL 5-6894 T.M Kraus

Mar 6,1961 Vol XII No 50 The Weekly NYC Theatre Newsletter Digest Service- Published 52 weeks a year- $25 per year

This Week in NYC

Eight Broadway shows are continuing on "twofers", the two-for-one ticket device usually reserved for the summer doldrums. Productions include--Becket, Gypsy, Music Man, My Fair Lady, Tenth Man, Tenderloin, Toys in the Attic. All the Way Home joins the list this week, and The Wall, which was slated to close Mar 4 after 168 performances, also used the cut-rate tickets.

Plays

Far Country postponed NY debut one week to Mar 28... Donnybrook! musical with Eddie Foy, Jr and Susan Johnson to open May 18 ...How to Succeed Without Really Trying musical postponed from May to early next fall... Lord Pengo new comedy by S.N. Behrman to be presented in Feb 1962 byPaul Gregory with Charles Boyer.

Broadway Business

Variety grosses for week show an overall increase due to wide use of "twofers." The five regularly priced musicals were the only sell-outs, with Under the Yum Yum Tree and The Tenth Man tying for bottom place with 50% of capacity.

Players

Jessica Walter replaced Joan Hotchkiss, Advise & Consent ...David Varsi returned to The Tenth Man after illness, Frank Marin subbed... Carmen de Lavallade joined Impulse jazz revue ...Anthony Quinn to leave Becket Apr 1 to start "Barrabbas" film in Italy... Harry Bannister, 72, last seen in Purple Dust, died in NY after short illness.

Special Events

Abe Feder, Jean Rosenthal, Dr Joel Rubin to discuss " Esthetics of Lighting Pertaining to Entertainment" Mar 8 at National Lighting Exposition, NY Colosseum

NYC Calendar

Five Posts in the Market Place- Gate (162-2nd Av) 3/5. Repertory Co of Gate Theatre presents fifth play of season, a new drama by Algiras Landsbergis, directed by Sidney Walters with Philip Abbott, Barbara Ames, Shelia Copelan.

Roots-Mayfair (Hotel Paramount 265 W 46) 3/6. Normaid Productions present new play by Arnold Wesker, directed by Mark Rydell with Mary Doyle, Janet Ward, Katharine Squire.

Cry of the Raindrop- St Marks Playhouse (133-2nd Av) 3/7 Kelsey Marechal-Seymour Litvin - off present new play by Lonny Chapman, directed by Robert Paschal, with Lou Antonio, June Harding, Joan Harvey. Postponed from 3/4.

Le Dindon- City Center - 3/7. Comedie Francaise presents final bill of three week NYC repertory, modern comedy by Georges Feydeau.

Mary, Mary- Hayes 3/8 Roger Stevens presents new comedy by Jean Kerr, directed by Joseph Anthony with Barbara Bel Geddes, Barry Nelson, John Cromwell.

The Devil's Advocate-Rose 3/9. Dore Schary- Walter Reilly present new play adapted and directed by Schary from Morris L. West's novel with Sam Levene, Leo Genn, Edward Mulhare.

Theatre TV Notes

Mar 6 WNTA(NY) Play of Week is The Old Foolishness by Paul Vincent Carroll with Jean Muir, Albert Salmi, Sally Ann Howes... Little Mary Sunshine's life story will be detailed on CBS Mar 11 Accent... Show Girl to be seen on Toronto Pay TV week of Apr 2 at $1.50. Hedda Gabler and The Counsel will be shown later.

Off Broadway

Shows that closed include --To Damascus after 16 performances, There Is A Play Tonight, Kreutzer Sonata and Cicero, all after 15, and Tiger Rag after 14. The Moon in the Yellow River is slated to close Mar 5 after 32, and Epitaph for George Dillon is due to end its run Mar 12 after 86. The Octoroon also closed. Walk-Up will move from Provincetown Mar 13 to another playhouse... The Balcony will continue indefinitely.

Feast of Panthers a new play by Tom Del Vecchio about Oscar Wilde will be presented Mar 21 at East 74th St by John Bowman-Richard Roffman with Claire Luce... What a Killing a new musical about the prohibition era will be presented Mar 27 at Folksbiene Playhouse (175 E Bway) by Jack Collins, Gene Montefiore directs cast headed by Paul Hartman, Karen Chandler. Book by Fred Hebert, producer of Donnybrook!, music and lyrics by George Harwell... A Hell of an Angel a new musical by Tony and Rosalie Calabrese to be presented this spring by Julius Hochman with Florence Hayle... Smiling the Boy Fell Dead a new musical by Sheldon Harnick, Ira Wallach, David Baker to be presented Apr 11 at Cherry Lane by Ted Mann - George Kogel, directed by Word Baker. Tryout was in 1954 at Margo Jones Theatre, Dallas.

Theatre Film Notes

Robert Ryan, Peter Ustinov star in Billy Budd ... Jumbo with Jimmy Durante, Doris Day starts May 15... Pat Boone to star in Drink to Me Only ... Faustus German film by Hamburg cast that played City Center just released.

Theatre Book Notes

"Drama On Stage" by Randolph Goodman to be published in May by Holt, Rinehart, Winston.

DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

The Death of Bessie Smith- York 3/1. 4 pros-Times, Post, Journal American, World Telegram & Sun- and 1 con-Herald Tribune- filed on new short play by Edward Albee presented by Theatre 1961-Richard Barr-Clinton Wilder with Albee's "American Dream." Lawrence Arrick directed the new presentation with Rae Allen, Robert Blossom, John McCurry. It replaced "Domino Furioso" dance satire which earlier had replaced Bartleby opera. "American Dream" opened Jan 24 and drew 4 pros-News, Post, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American-and 2 cons- Times, Herald Tribune. Affirmative aisle-sitters on "Death" were widely divided and included two outright raves for playlet and players, one mild approval , and one okaying play not players. Watts, Post, and McClain, Journal American, cheered current twin-bill as exciting, arresting theatre. Post man suggested "Death" should be presented as second half of program, it has sharply sketched characters which come to life in the briefest strokes and is brilliantly acted. Journal American aisle-man rated the early Albee play, currently running in Berlin, as his most compelling exhibiting his extraordinary talent for straight play construction, an incisive mastery of character delineation and an unrelenting ear. Aston, WTS, also rated it has Albee's best, obscene but authentic and recommended it only for those with strong nerves and stomach. Taubman, Times, okayed it as worth seeing , noting that he hoped cast eventually will master its intense, brooding spirit. Sole dissenter Crist, Herald Tribune, vetoed it as a heavy-handed diatribe on race relations, a marathon monologue of invective delivered at break-neck speed and with scourchingly polite venom by Allen.

Rendezvous at Senlis - Gramercy Arts (138 E 27)- 2/27. 4 pros-Herald Tribune, Mirror, Post, Journal American- and 3 cons- Times, News, World Telegram & Sun- filed on Edward Owen Marsh's translation of 1937 Jean Anouilh play presented by Claude Giroux-Emmanuel Azenberg, directed by Zeke Berlin with Michael Lipton, Maureen McNalley, Rosina Fernhoff, Frieda Altman, and Russell Gold. Affirmative side mildly approved of early and talky Anouilh script, generally recommending it for his fans only, while negative found most of it dull. Pro voter Kerr, Herald Tribune, enjoyed gently, gracefully wittily centered play that could be vastly improved by editing second act and toning down several performances. Play is well-worth small touching up that is needed, Kerr concludes. Coleman, Mirror, okayed it for buffs who want to study the authors development, applauding fine actors as best item.. Reviewer noted seats in small theatre are uncomfortable and tricky. McClain, Journal American , also suggested editing to lift comedy from good to great; he applauded entire cast except Fernhoff. Watts, Post, admitted it was not Anouilh at his best, but he did find enough of his quality to make it distinctly worth the attention of his fans. Con voter Taubman, Times, liked first and last scenes, but feared rest was too tedious , while cast he marked off as an eager group making a reasonable try. Davis, News, listed it as an excellent production of a rickety work with painfully slow direction. Aston, WTS, could not decide if it was the play or the translation to blame, but he was sure the acting could have been better.

"CD" Subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out of town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC

Walk Up- Provincetown- (133 MacDougal St) 2/23. 4 pros- News, Mirror, World Telegram & Sun, Journal American- and 3 cons- Times, Herald Tribune, Post- filed on new play by Gerald Sanford, presented by Ellie Horn-William Holzmann, directed by Matt Cimber with Shelia Barry, Mary Tahmin, Carol Guilford. Majority mildly approved first play by author as promising, well acted, while minority panned script, but okayed players. News reviewer Davis found four individual sketches sometimes fascinating, always interesting. Coleman, Mirror, believes author is well-worth watching, he has some of the early Saroyan's fondness for people. Aston, WTS, thought the writing rang true, graced with flashes of beauty. McClain, Journal American, applauded embryo talents of both cast and author. Dissenters Calta, Times, and Crist, Herald Tribune, blasted script harshly. Former labeled it piffling, sketchy in characterization, completely lacking in theatrical effectiveness. Latter excused actors, okayed the set and rated script inept. Watts, Post, admired the frank sentiment of the author, but noted script lacked necessary building power, while he rated some of the acting as bad.

Tartuffe- City Center- 2/28-3/5. 6 pros- and 1 con- News- filed on second bill of Comedie Francaise three week presentation in NYC by S. Hurok with Louis Seigner as director and title player of Moliere classic. Negative voice from Chapman, News, compared present company unfavorably with group that visited NYC with this same production in 1955. Colleagues who raved over current version disagreed. Funke, Times, cheered precisely conceived, polish and vigorous portrait by Seigner and entire company. Kerr, Herald Tribune, admired eternally graceful company, with particular emphasis on Annie Ducaux. Coleman, Mirror, joined in applause for fascinatingly etched portraits. Watts, Post, was particularly impressed with the skill of the group in combining the flourish of comic style with excellent realistic acting in notably brilliant fashion. Aston, WTS, summed up the company as incredibly deft, with perfect team work in a lusty rendition. McClain, Journal American, enjoyed the timeless monograph , the group's offering best suited to the US audiences' faltering French. Translation via the transistor radios is by John S White.

THEATRE

BOOK

COMMENTS

"Seven Plays by Bertold Brecht" edited by Eric Bentley (Grove Press $8.50) recommended by three reviewers. Pryce-Jones, Times , admitted early plays in volume offer very serious obstacles to the reader, but recommended volume for valuable insights on the playwright provided by Bentley. Popkin, Herald Tribune, hopes present volume will do something to overcome the still prevailing notion that Brecht, except for Three Penny Opera , is an esoteric dramatist; book shows his plays are fully alive at every instant. Aston, World Telegram & Sun, okayed tome for giving brain a whirl.

THEATRE

TV

COMMENTS

No Exit presentation on WNTA(NY) Play of the Week with Dane Clark, Colleen Dewhurst, Diane Hyland drew 2 pro votes and 2 con votes from daily TV critics. Gould, Time, raved over Sartre 1948 play presented with devastating intensity and brilliance, and Bakal, Herald Tribune, applauded provocative, imaginative play. But O'Brian, Journal American, and Gardella, News, condemned depressing playlet as well as the 8 30 PM production time.

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

"TWOFER" PROBLEMS... Although "twofers" give a producer an area of maneuver and enable him to collect a full tariff from unwitting or eager patrons, they also breed frustration and wrath, states Taubman, Times. Critic reprinted several angry letters from readers who attempted and failed to redeem "twofer" ducats at Becket, Gypsy and Toys in the Attic. Taubman complimented Period of Adjustment producer who kept Williams' play open an extra two weeks by cutting tickets to a $3.60 top. Such price-cutting has the great virtue of being straightforward and not subject to misunderstanding or abuse... NYC License Commissioner O'Connell checked box-office complaints on "twofers" and found everything in order, reports McHarry, News, who forwarded letters on subject to City Hall.

COLUMN TIPS... City Investing Co has dropped plans to rebuild Bijou and Morosco into a new 1400 seat theatre and has placed all its theatre holdings on 45th St & 46th St up for sale, hears Farrell, World Telegram & Sun... Arthur Miller to write play on Oakes murder case in Nassau, notes Wilson, Post.

QUOTE ADS PANNED... Out-of-context quotes from the first night reviews employed by press agents has become so flagrant recently that McClain, Journal American, thinks the NY Critics Circle would be justified in taking legal steps demanding approval before publication of these misleading blurbs. Case at hand is current Come Blow Your Horn ad which misquotes Journal American, Herald Tribune, Post and Mirror reviews, McClain details.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... If all the quacks who think they know what is wrong with the theatre would start buying tickets, the stage might be the first industry to recover from the recession, concludes Chapman, News... London production of The Connection might infuriate Kenneth Tynan so much he may return to US, hopes Watts, Post... People still want to see shows that involve laughs, pretty girls, recognizable tunes and fast pacing (like Do Re Mi) lists Considine, Journal American.

6 PM CURTAIN... Argument for 6 PM opening night curtain, suggested by McClain, Journal American, backed by Davis, News, as a solid one. This idea would make it possible for the reviewer to have dinner after the show and still make the deadline.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... The Music Man should sing and speak louder urges News reader who would rather see musical in Majestic rather than larger Broadway... Broadway producers are impractical dreamers who would not survive a month in the business world were they to apply their methods their, predicts Times reader.

EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC... London actor Albert Finney, Billy Liar, stopped the show and told a rather noisy audience at the Cambridge that if they did not shut up, he would shut up and go home. 'Stage" reports that audience did quiet down and applauded the actor for his outburst. British trade weekly suggested that audiences sometimes feel free to be rude because theatre is still rated by some as a second class art.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

Come Blow Your Horn is a shallow, noisy, machine made comedy combining stereotyped characterizations with repetitive comedy lines that are not particularly interesting first time round. With the sole exception of Warren Berlinger, the cast either overplays or underplays its collecrive way through three trite acts. Berlinger, a young professional, tries to steer the mood from realism to farce, but cannot do it single handedly. Without the slightest exaggeration the script of this comedy makes The FifthSeason and Abie's Irish Rose look and sound like authentic American Moliere.

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Rendezvous At Senlis is well-worth the visit to the tiny Gramercy Arts for its delightful premise, its delicious first act and a brilliant performance by Michael Lipton in the leading role. Unhappily the rest of the evening and/or cast are not equal to the first stanza, while the direction with a so-so supporting cast grinds to a halt. But that first act is just about perfect fun.

* *

The most startling theatre news in decades may result from a report this week by counsel Burton Zorn to the League of NY Theatres suggesting that all of the League's contracts are illegal, because they foster the closed shop. At first mention the respective union heads said "Not Me." But unless the theatre industry enjoyed last year's League-Equity battle all concerned had better sit down and talk about this right now. Theatre has enough trouble without being "illegal" too.

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An American "honors list" akin to the Queen's Honors List has been suggested in a new bill introduced by Sen Javits (R-NY). The bill would authorize the President to annually award 25 Presidential medals to individuals for outstanding contributions in such fields as the arts, education, social service, etc. Each award would carry a tax-exempt grant of $10,000. No provision for being knighted is included, yet.

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All time prize for "Most Honest Theatre Ad" -- Off Broadway Division-- easily won by The Moon in the Yellow River. Display ad frankly stated " Come Now-- Hurry--Last Week- Closing Sun because not enough people have come, despite the most enthusiastic praise. " Short of calling the non-ticket buyers names, this is about as forthright as producers are allowed to come in family papers.

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Pay TV may not be "here", but it is mighty close. Show Girl will be presented at a special Sun Apr 2 evening performance in NY and seen on pay TV in Toronto for a $1.50 per set fee. The program will be taped the first night and repeated for the week. Cast members will get a flat fee and a percentage for future showings. Hedda Gabler and The Counsel will also be presented to Canadian audiences the first month of the International Tele-Meter Co project. How big an audience it will attract, how much authors and cast members will get, and a half a hundred other questions will soon be answered. This information will have a profound effect on the first US test city, Hartford, Conn. and the entire theatre industry.

OUTER BROADWAY THEATRE LETTER

College Theatre

Yale Univ set up full professorship dealing with engineering problems of theatrical production.

Loeb Drama Center, Harvard Univ designers Hugh A. Stubbins, Jr and George Izenour received $1000 Rodgers & Hammerstein Award for " persons doing most for theatre in Boston area during past year."

Brooklyn College, NY Varsity Players presented The Caucasian Chalk Circle. The Diary of Anne Frank Mar 23-26 and The Boy Friend Mar 18- 21 completes season.

Charlotte Smith, Smith College, Northampton, Mass to run acting school this summer at Berkshire Playhouse, Stockbridge Mass... William Allman, Baldwin-Wallace College, Berea, Ohio, to supervise summer theatre run by college.

AETA News

The Limbo Kid by Robert Downing to be presented this year by members of Southeast Theatre Conference... Silver Anniversary Convention of AETA Aug 28-30 at Waldorf Astoria Hotel, NYC.

Winter Repertory

See How They Run to be presented Mar 13 at Royal Poinciana Playhouse, Palm Beach, Fla with Frank Schofield... Rain with Monique van Vooren to be directed by Gordon Davidson Mar 14 at Fred Miller Theatre, Milwaukee... Send Me No Flowers to be presented at Miller Apr 4 with Robert Q Lewis... The Boy Friend with Scott Merrill and Holly Harris now at Ferrall's Playhouse, Palm Springs.

Playhouses

Circle Arts Theatre, San Diego, Calif , new arena theatre seating 1800 being constructed in shape of giant dome to debut May 26 with West Side Story starring Carla Alberghetti... National Theatre, Washington, D. C. boxes being extended and refurbished in antipation of heavy use by President Kennedy and other officials.

Summer Playhouses

Peninsula Players Theatre, Fish Creek, Wisc, acquired by NY-Chicago group headed by Kenneth Carroad for $35,000 at sherrif's auction... Alexandria, Minn, Theatre seating 300 to be constructed if $40,000 bond issue successful. Dr Arthur Houseman, St Cloud , Minn, State College , will be director of new theatre on shore of Lake Le Home Dieu... Jack Ragotzy and Louis Girard both to direct this summer at Barn Theatre , Augusta, Mich... Barry Yellin planning summer season of musicals Jul 17-Aug 12 at Univ of Puerto Rico.

Paper Mill Playhouse, Millburn, NJ to open extended season Apr 3 with The Country Girl and Apr 17 A View From the Bridge , both with Shelley Winters... The Vegas Notion a new musical by June Barbour and John Balamos to be directed and presented for summer tour by Matt Conley prior to a Broadway try... Arthur Treacher signed for Paradise Island musical at Jones Beach Marine Theatre, NY

Drama Desk

Stanley Eichelbaum replaced Charles Einstein as drama editor of San Francisco Examiner.

Church Drama

47th annual presentation of The Passion Play presented by the Church of theHoly Family, Union City, NJ Mar 12, 19, 26 at Park Theatre.

Shakespeare

Word Baker to direct As You Like It at Stratford, Conn ... Rumson, NJ Board of Education rejected local American Legion demand for banning NY Shakespeare Festival Romeo & Juliet because of producer Joe Papp 's background. Papp's program for his new Central Park amphitheatre to include- Much Ado About Nothing Jun 29, A Midsummer Night's Dream Jul 24 and Richard II Aug 21.

Road Shows

Rhinoceros will tour next fall as result of approval of NY production by Outer Broadway critics... Comedie Francaise reception by French Embassy held at Blair House, offered by President Kennedy after recent Embassy fire.

London

Time and Yellow Roses a new play by Leslie Storm to be presented in Apr starring Flora Robson, just returned from tour of South Africa in The Aspern Papers... Kenneth Haigh replaced Laurence Harvey in Sartre's Loser Wins with Claire Bloom, Diane Cilento Apr 17 at Royal Court ... Alan Schneider left The Connection as director prior to opening.

Paris

Gaite-Lyrique Theatre may close and Maringny Theatre will convert to a film house.

US Repertory

Helen Hayes, Helen Menken, June Havoc, Leif Erickson visited with President Kennedy at White House prior to leaving for Mar 6 opening of Theatre Guild -State Dept Repertory Co tour.

Europe

West Side Story opened tour in Tel Aviv to generally good reviews and sellout audiences ... Cambridge, Mass Drama Festival European Theatre Tour Jun 4-24 headed by Elliot Norton to cost $1250.

Africa

The Miracle Worker opened at Hofmeyr Theatre, Cape Town.

Tryout Calendar

Big Fish, Little Fish-Locust-Philadelphia 2/27

Carnival- National- Washington 3/9

Far Country- Shubert- New Haven 3/8

Happiest Girl in World-Shubert, Philadelphia 2/28

Current Road Tours

At the Drop of a Hat-O Keefe, Toronto 2/27

Five Finger Exercise-Hartford Los Angeles 2/21

Flower Drum Song- Shubert, Chicago- 11/14

Hostage- Civic-Chicago 2/20

Information formerly on "CD" chart available by mail, phone or in person to CD subscribers.